

## **CHAPTER 3: STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE**

### **Introduction**

At the end of each part of the CAHSEE, students completed a brief questionnaire that asked for their reactions to the test and their plans for high school and beyond. We examined the responses separately for students in the Class of 2004 (nearly all of whom were repeat test-takers) and students in the Class of 2005 (nearly all of whom were first-time test-takers). For students in the Class of 2005, we also analyzed responses separately for English learners and for students receiving special education services. For comparison, we have included responses from the March 2002 administration separated into repeat test-takers and first-time test-takers. Response frequencies are shown for the following groups of students:

- Class of 2004 students testing in the 2002–03 school year
- Class of 2004 students who were repeat test-takers in March 2002
- Class of 2004 students who were first-time test-takers in March 2002
- Class of 2005 students testing in the 2002–03 school year including:
  - All students
  - English learners
  - Special education students

In this chapter, we present the responses of students in each of these cohorts. The primary intended comparisons are:

- Class of 2004 students in 2002–03 to repeat test-takers in 2002
- Class of 2005 students in 2002–03 to first-time examinees in 2002
- English learners and special education students in the Class of 2005 to all Class of 2005 students.

In making the intended comparisons, Class of 2004 and Class of 2005 students were treated differently for several reasons. First, Class of 2004 students tested in 2002–03 were all repeat test-takers. The most appropriate comparison for these students was the sample of repeat test-takers in the Spring 2002 administrations. By comparison, Class of 2005 students tested in 2002–03 were first-time test-takers. Consequently, we compared their responses to the student questionnaire items to responses of first-time test-takers in spring 2002. Finally, The number of English learners and special education students in the Class of 2004 tested in 2002–03 was judged too small to justify separate analysis of their questionnaire responses. We chose instead to focus on English learners and special education students in the Class of 2005 and compared their responses to responses for the Class of 2005 as a whole.

We made several decisions in defining the samples reported here. First, many students in the Class of 2004 and a few in the Class of 2005 tested more than once between July 2002 and May 2003. We have counted these students each time they responded so the overall counts are larger than the number of different students tested. Second, some students in the

Class of 2005 appear to have tested early, before March 2003. We counted all students in the Sept. 2002 through May 2003 administrations who were listed as 10<sup>th</sup> graders, as members of the Class of 2005. We counted students in the July 2002 administration who were either 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> graders, and students in subsequent administrations who were listed as 11<sup>th</sup> graders, as members of the Class of 2004. A small number of students listed in other grades, including adult education, were excluded from these analyses. Finally, we used preliminary data on the demographics of each student. Final corrections to these demographics, including particularly the student's grade level, would have only a small impact on the overall comparisons.

### **Survey Items**

The student survey contained the same eight questions that have been included in prior surveys:

- Question 1. How did you prepare for this test? (Check all that apply.)
- A. A teacher or counselor told me about the purpose and importance of the test.
  - B. I practiced on a sample of the test.
  - C. A teacher spent time in class getting me ready to take the test.
  - D. I did not do anything to prepare for this test.
- Question 2. How important is this test to you?
- A. Very important
  - B. Somewhat important
  - C. Not important
- Question 3. Do you think you will graduate from high school?
- A. Yes
  - B. No
  - C. Not sure
- Question 4. Will it be harder to graduate if you have to pass a test like this?
- A. Yes, a lot harder
  - B. Somewhat harder
  - C. Not much harder at all
  - D. I really don't know.
- Question 5. What do you think you will do after high school?
- A. I will join the military.
  - B. I will go to community college.
  - C. I will go to a 4-year college or university.
  - D. I will go to vocational/technical/trade school.
  - E. I will work full-time.
  - F. I really don't know what I will do after high school.
- Question 6. How sure are you about what you will do after high school?
- A. Very sure
  - B. Somewhat sure
  - C. Not sure at all
- Question 7. How well did you do on this test?
- A. I did as well as I could.

B. I did not do as well as I could have.

Question 8: The main reasons I did not do as well on this test as I could have are (mark all that apply):

A. I was too nervous to do as well as I could.

B. I was not motivated to do well.

C. I did not have time to do as well as I could.

D. There are questions on this test that cover topics I was never taught.

E. There are questions on this test that cover topics I was taught, but I did not remember how to answer them.

F. There were other reasons why I did not do as well as I could.

## Findings

### Number of Respondents

Table 3.1 indicates the number of respondents in each of the test cohort groups. Classification of a 2002 examinee as “first-time” or “repeater” was based on self-report. Students who did not say whether they took the test in 2001 or who did not answer the questionnaire were excluded from analysis. In particular, this latter constraint resulted in the exclusion of many ELA testees who did not complete the second constructed-response item and never reached the questionnaire. Also, students who claimed to be repeaters but could not be matched in the 2001 database were excluded.

Table 3.1 Number of Respondents by Cohort to the Student Questionnaire at the End of the Tests

Cohort	<i>Test Taken</i>	
	ELA	Math
Class of 2004 Testing in 2002–03	164,758	309,415
Repeat Examinees in 2002	32,633	87,718
First-Time Examinees in 2002	61,005	77,288
Class of 2005—All Students Tested	409,380	425,724
Class of 2005—English Learners	70,074	73,344
Class of 2005—Special Education	34,341	35,958

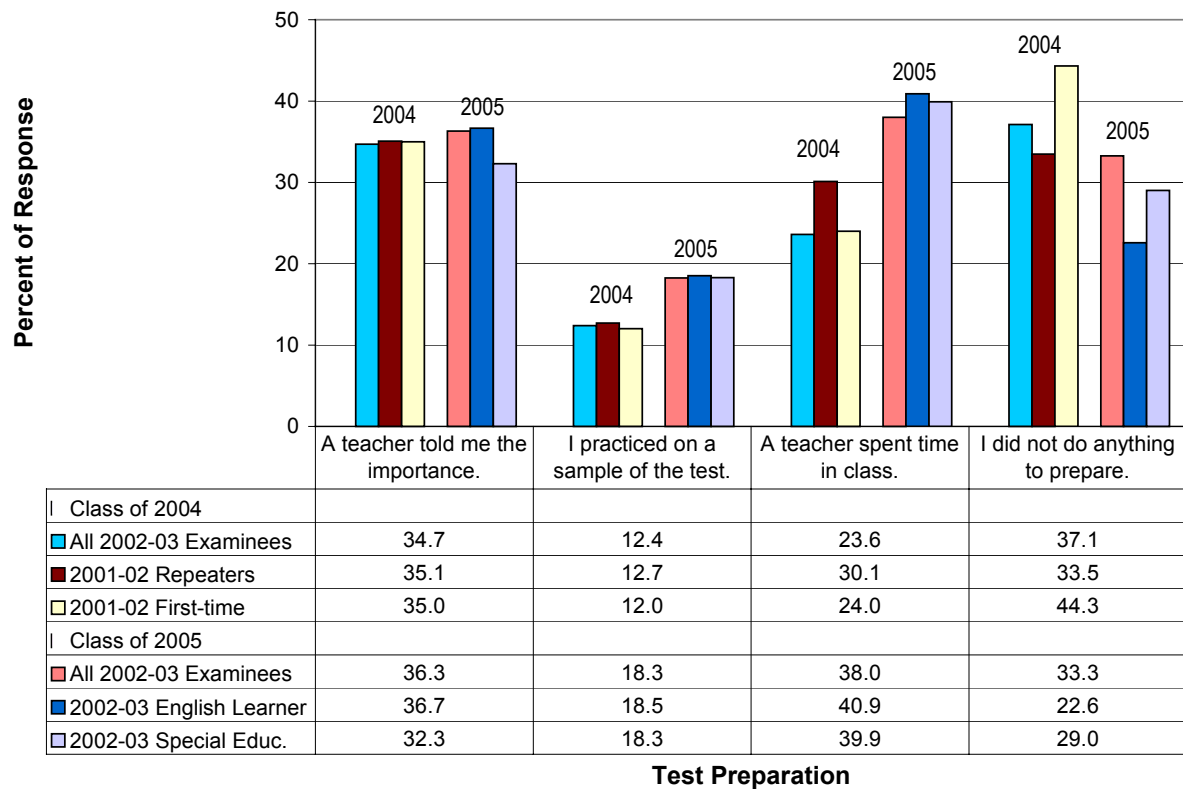
### Test Preparation

The first question on the student survey asked the examinees how they prepared for the exam. Responses after taking the ELA test and the math test are presented in Figure 3.1 and Figure 3.2, respectively. The figures show clear differences in test preparation between the class of 2004 and the class of 2005. The class of 2005 had a larger percentage of students who reported either practicing test samples (18% versus 12%) or spending time with a teacher in class (38% versus 24%) than the class of 2004. At the same time, a slightly smaller percentage of students indicated no preparation activities for the class of 2005 than for the class of 2004 (33% versus 37%).

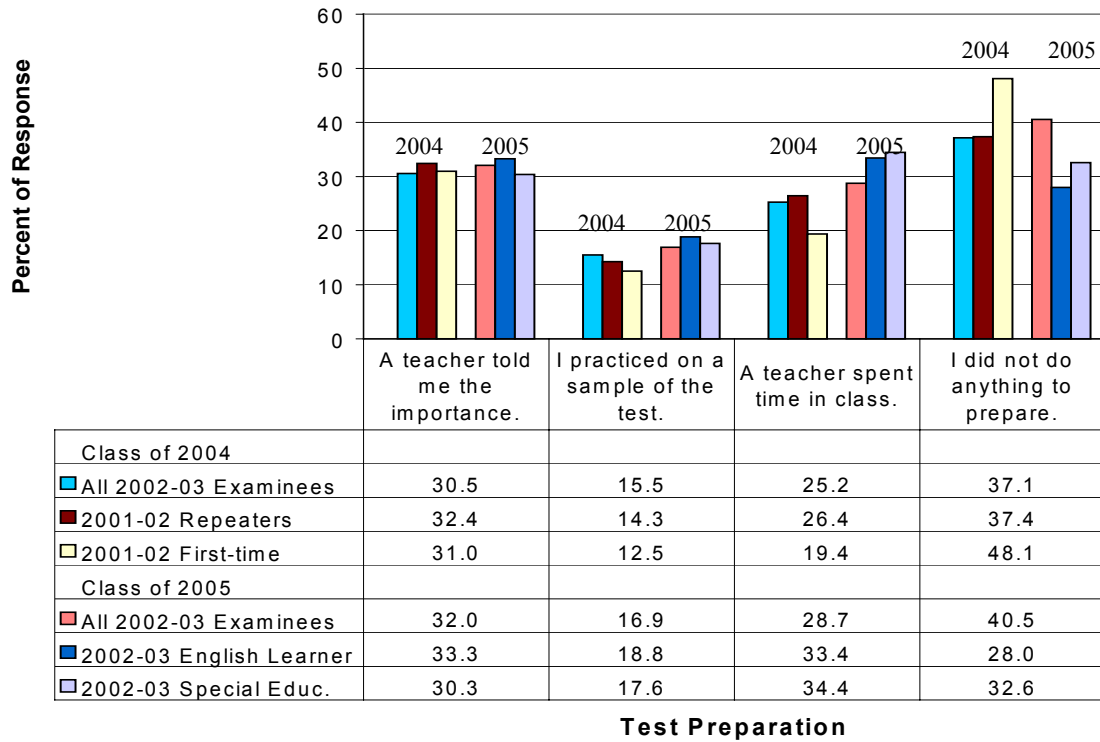
Among the class of 2004, those who repeated the tests before (including both the all 2002–03 examinees and the 2001–02 repeaters) had a slightly higher percentage of engagement in test preparation activities than those who took the test for first time; consistently, the repeating cohorts (about 35%) were less likely to do nothing to prepare for the test than the first-time cohort (about 45%).

Among all the groups, English learners and special education students indicated they were most likely to engage in test preparation activities and least likely to do nothing for test preparation. Thus lack of preparation effort is not a factor in the lower performance of these students.

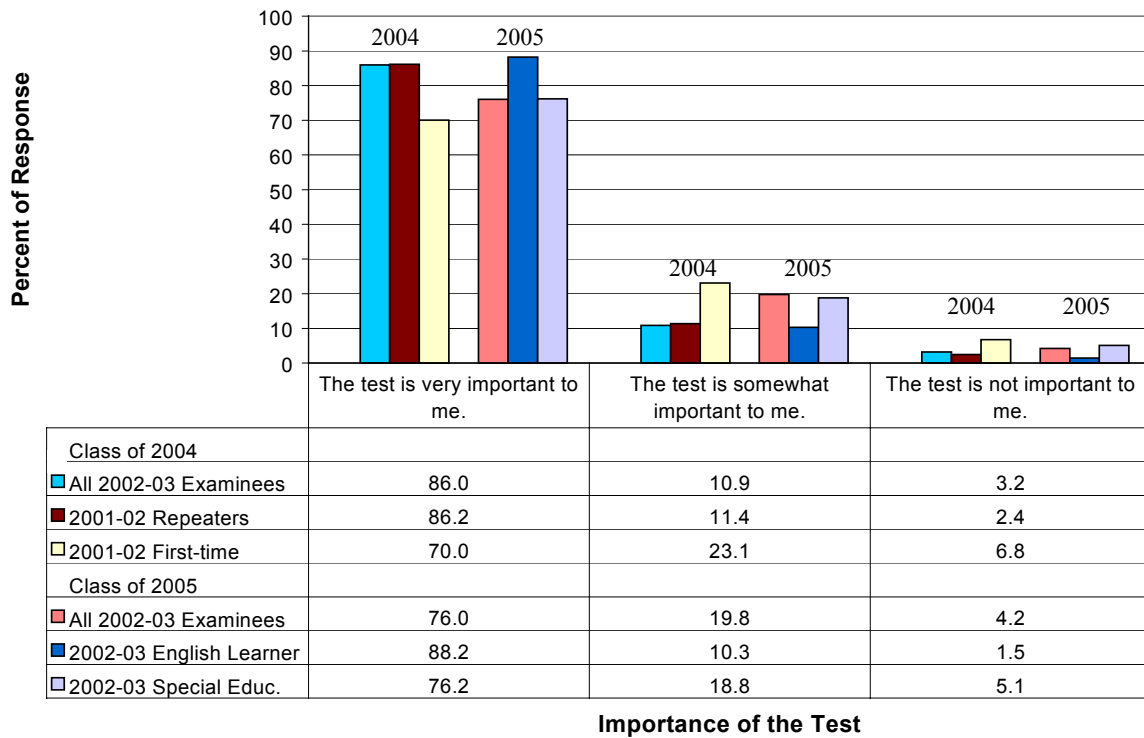
The differences described above between the two years' cohorts can be observed on both the surveys after the ELA and math tests. For the Class of 2005, students reported lower rates of preparation activities for the mathematics test. Over 40 percent reported no preparation activities for the Math test compared to 33 percent for the ELA test.



**Figure 3.1.** Different cohorts' responses to Question 1 following the ELA test—How did you prepare for this test?



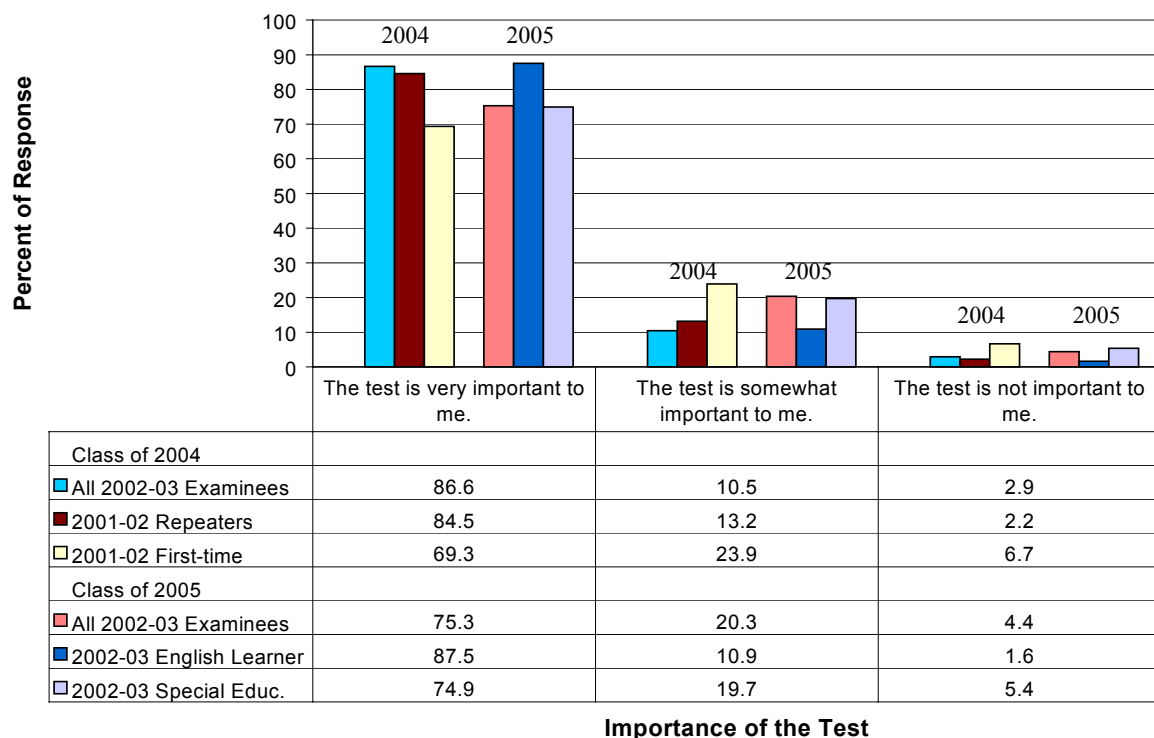
**Figure 3.2.** Different cohorts' responses to Question 1 following the math test—How did you prepare for this test?



**Figure 3.3.** Different cohorts' responses to Question 2 following the ELA test—How important is this test to you?

### Importance of the Test

The second question of the student survey asked examinees how important the CAHSEE was to them. Responses to the question from different cohorts after the ELA test and after the math test are presented in Figure 3.3 and Figure 3.4, respectively. The two figures show similar response patterns. Generally, an overwhelming majority (70% or above) of all the cohorts viewed the tests as “very important” to them. Only a small proportion of the respondents (below 7%) reported that the tests were “not important” to them. A slightly larger percentage of students who took the tests for the first time in the class of 2005 perceived the tests as “very important” to them than had the first-time test-takers in the class of 2004. Compared to other cohorts, the two repeater cohorts in the class of 2004 and English learner students in the Class of 2005 were more likely to view the tests as “very important” to them and less likely to respond with “somewhat important” or “not important” to them. It is worth noting that, in the class of 2005, students in special education did not show much difference from other students in their perceptions of the importance of the CAHSEE.

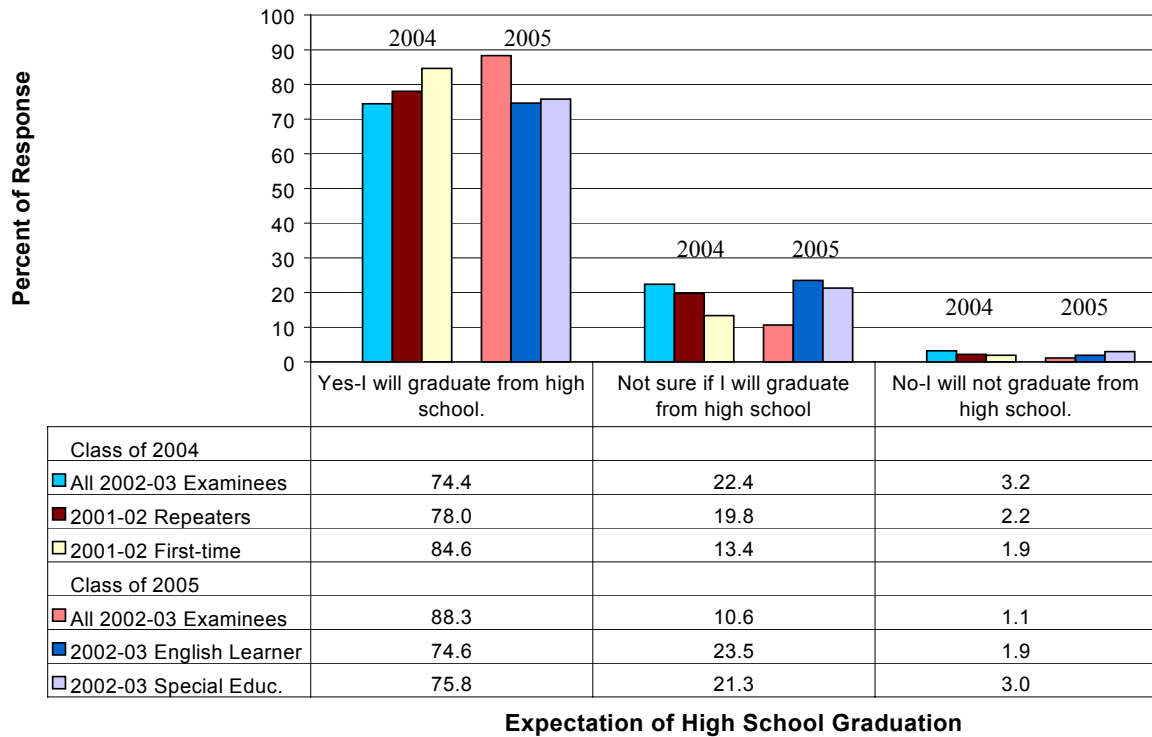


**Figure 3.4.** Different cohorts’ responses to Question 2 following the math test—How important is this test to you?

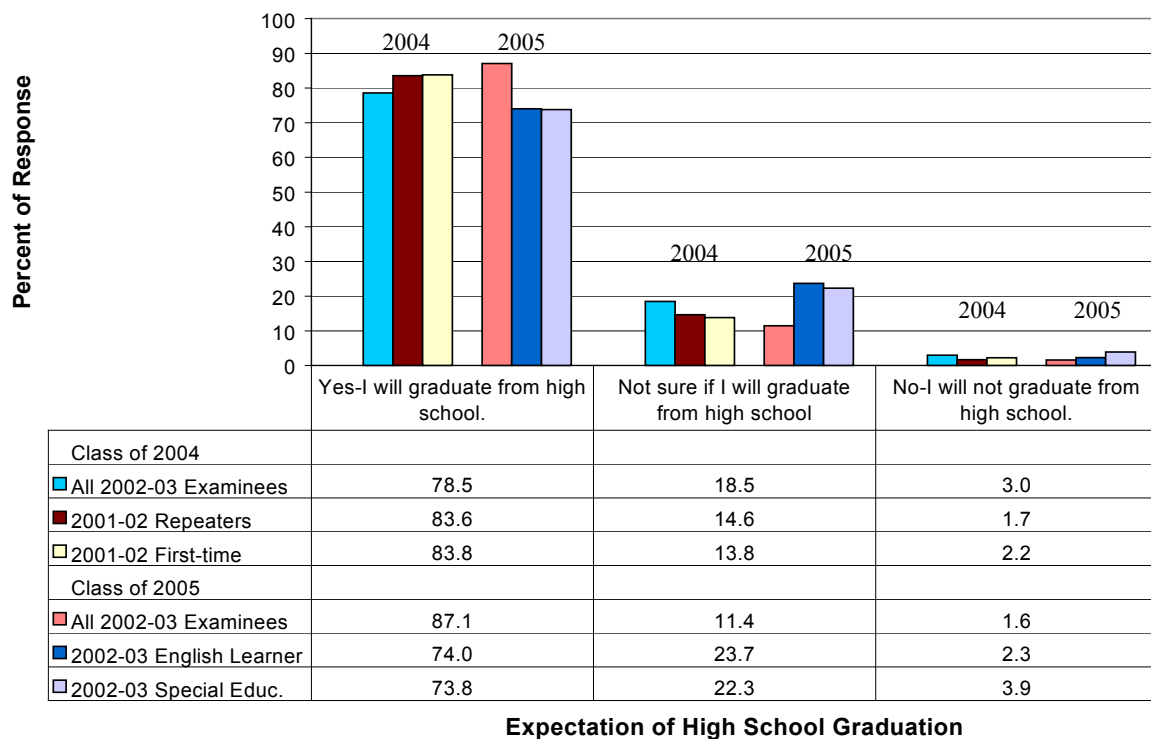
### Plans for High School and Beyond

Question 3 of the student survey asked examinees how sure they were that they would graduate from high school. Responses to this question from all groups after the ELA test and the math test are presented in Figure 3.5 and Figure 3.6, respectively. Overall, more than 70 percent of all cohorts expected that they would graduate from high school while less than 4 percent thought they would not graduate from high school. Among all the cohorts, the two

groups of first-time test-takers, including the “2001–02 first-time” group in the class of 2004 and the “all 2002–03 examinees” in the class of 2005, were most optimistic about their high school graduation. Students in the Class of 2004 who still had to pass the CAHSEE in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade were less optimistic about their prospects of graduating. The lower expectations of English learners and special education students were also consistent with the significantly lower passing rates for these groups.



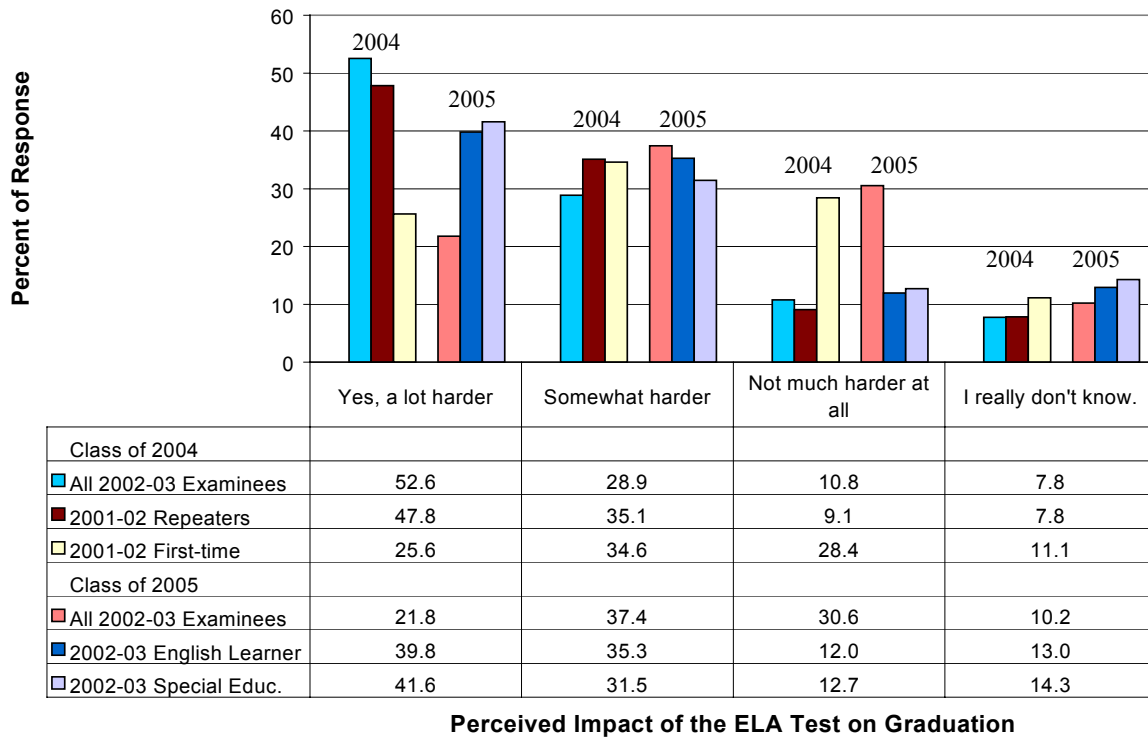
**Figure 3.5.** Different cohorts’ responses to Question 3 following the ELA test—Do you think you will graduate from high school?



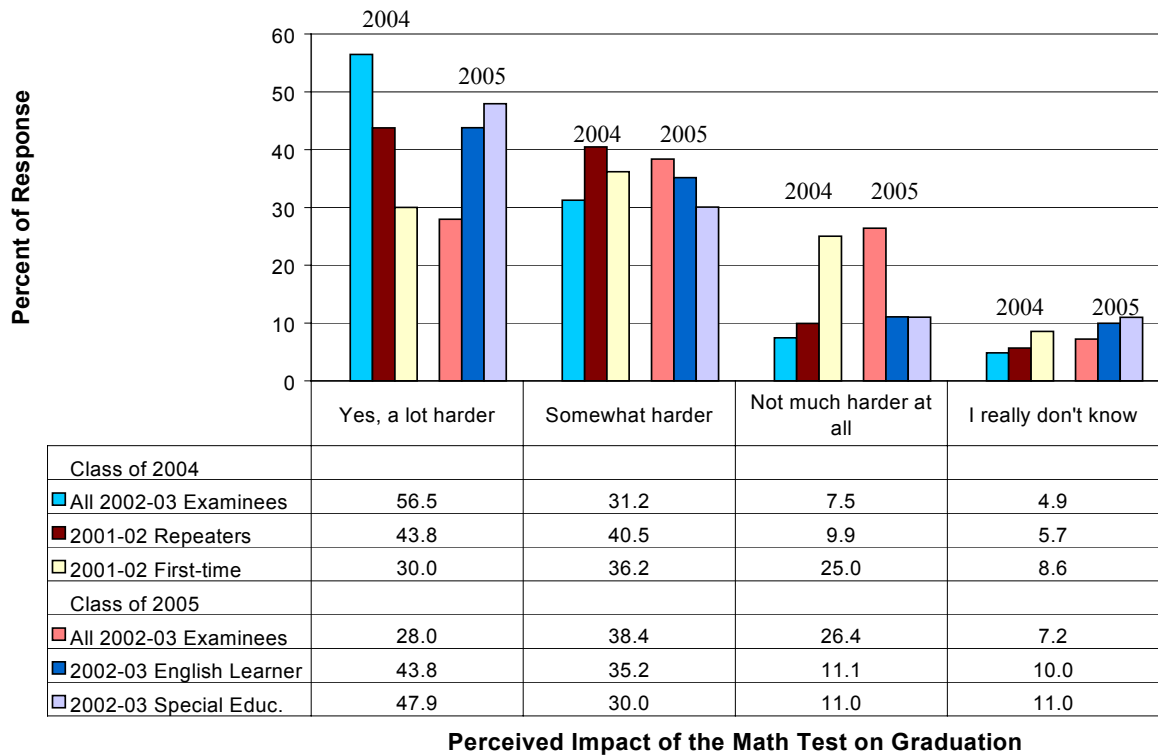
**Figure 3.6.** Different cohorts' responses to Question 3 following the math test—Do you think you will graduate from high school?

Question 4 of the student survey asked examinees if they believed the requirement to pass a test such as the CAHSEE would make it harder to graduate from high school. Responses from all the cohorts to this question after the ELA test and the math test are presented in Figure 3.7 and Figure 3.8, respectively. The majority of students in the Class of 2004 who had still not passed said that the CAHSEE requirement would make it a lot harder to graduate. Among students in the Class of 2005, English learners and special education students said that the CAHSEE would make graduation difficult at about twice the rate of all students (about 40% compared to 22%). In general, examinees were more likely to indicate “somewhat harder” or “a lot harder” and less likely to report “not much harder at all” to graduate from high school after taking the math test than after the ELA test. This suggests that the math test was more frustrating than the ELA test. This difference is a reflection of the considerably lower passing rates for the math portion of the CAHSEE.





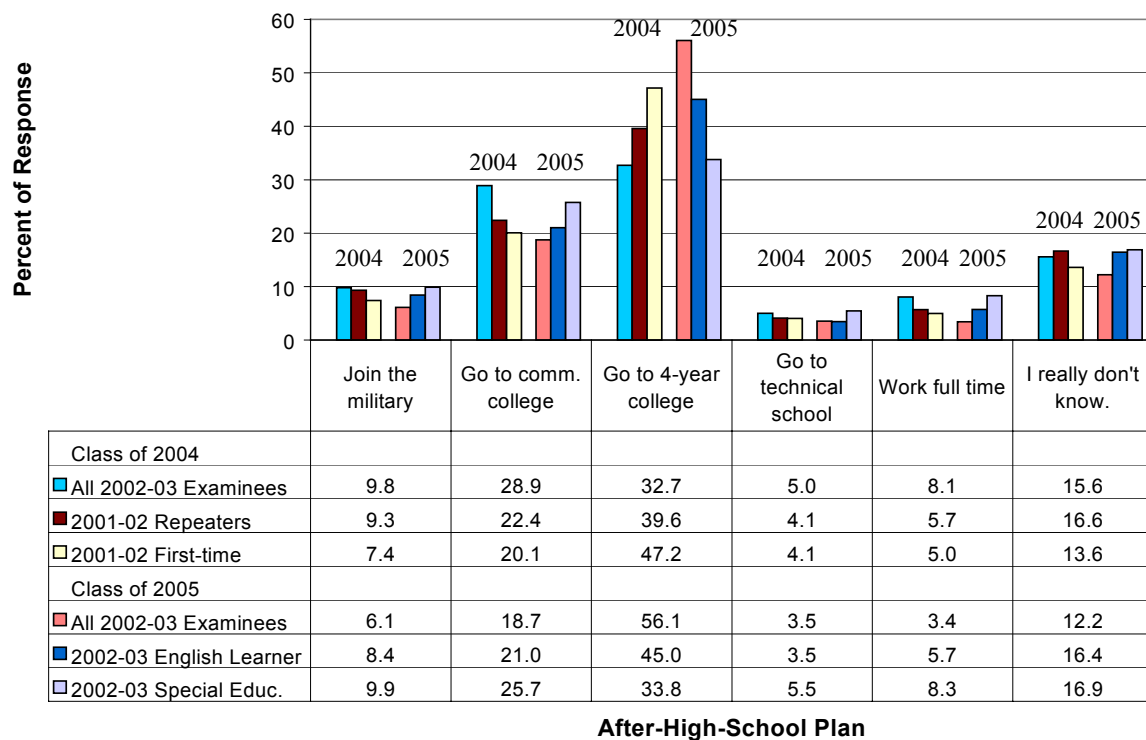
**Figure 3.7.** Different cohorts' responses to Question 4 following the ELA test—Will it be harder to graduate if you have to pass a test like this?



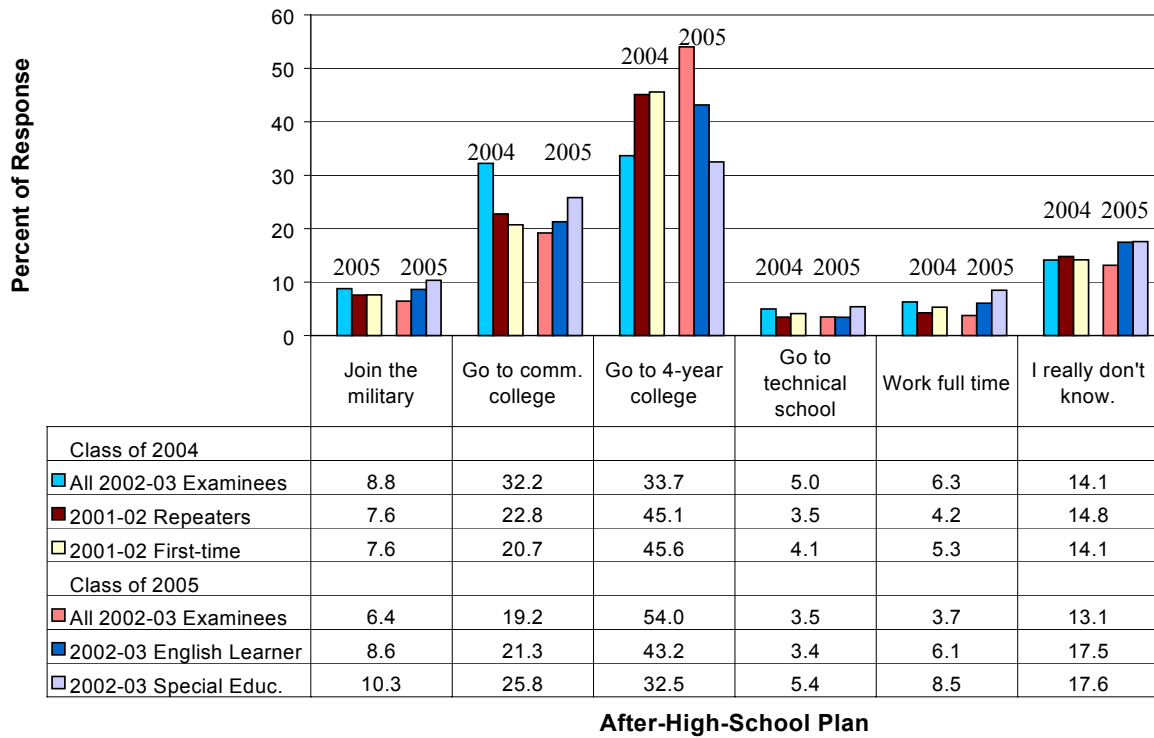
**Figure 3.8.** Different cohorts' responses to Question 4 following the math test—Will it be harder to graduate if you have to pass a test like this?

Question 5 of the student survey asked examinees about their plans after high school. The results (see Figure 3.9 and Figure 3.10) showed that, across all the cohorts, “go to 4-year college” was the most popular choice and “go to community college” was the second most popular choice. Those first-time test-takers were more likely to plan to go to 4-year college after high school than other cohorts of respondents. About 55 percent of the category, “all 2002–03 examinees” in the class of 2005 and about 45 percent of the “2001–02 first time” respondents indicated they planned to go to 4-year college. Between the two groups of repeat test-takers in the class of 2004, the “2001–02 repeaters” were more likely to indicate they would plan to go to 4-year college” and less likely to go to community college than the “all 2002–03 examinees.” A comparison of the three groups in the class of 2005 showed that students receiving special education services had the lowest rates of expectation for a “4-year college” life after high school while the rates of English learner students’ expectation for a “4-year college” stood between the “all 2002–03 examinees” and students in special education.

Special education students in the Class of 2005 and students in the Class of 2004 who were still testing as 11<sup>th</sup> graders were more likely to expect to join the military (about 10%), work full time (about 8%) or go to a technical school (about 5%) in comparison to students in the Class of 2005 overall (6, 4, and 3% respectively). The pattern of responses after the mathematics section was very similar to responses given after the ELA section.

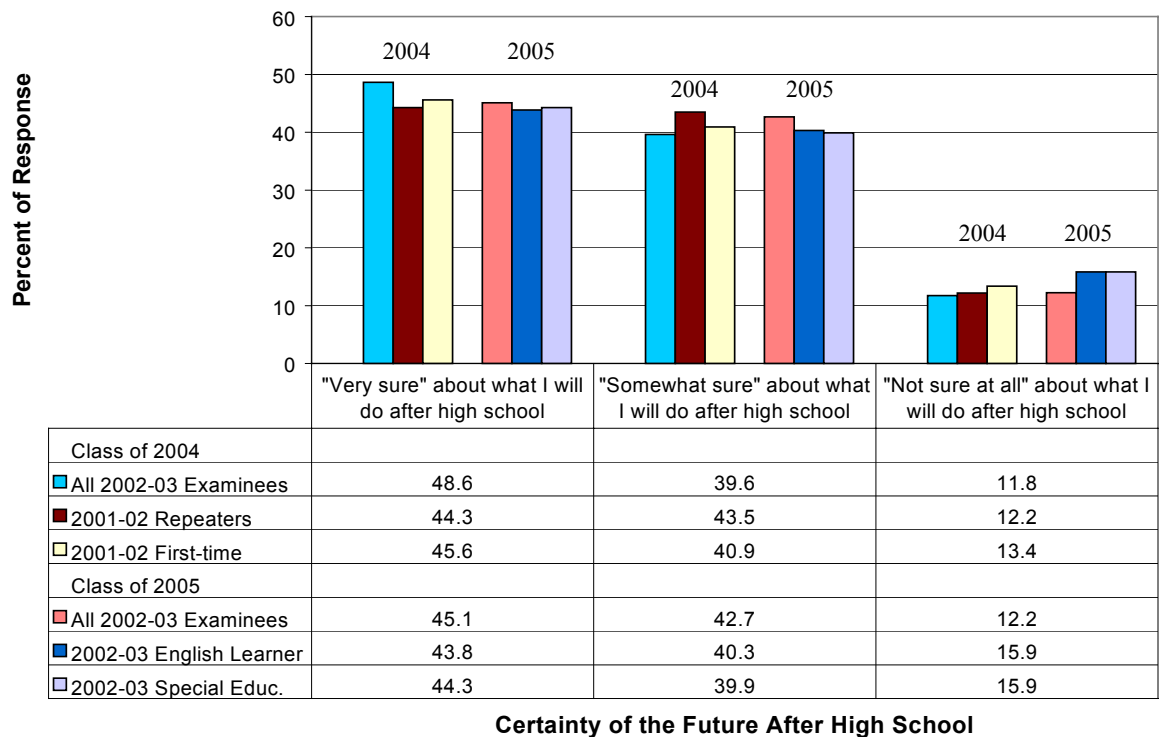


**Figure 3.9.** Different cohorts’ responses to Question 5 following the ELA test—What do you think you will do after high school?

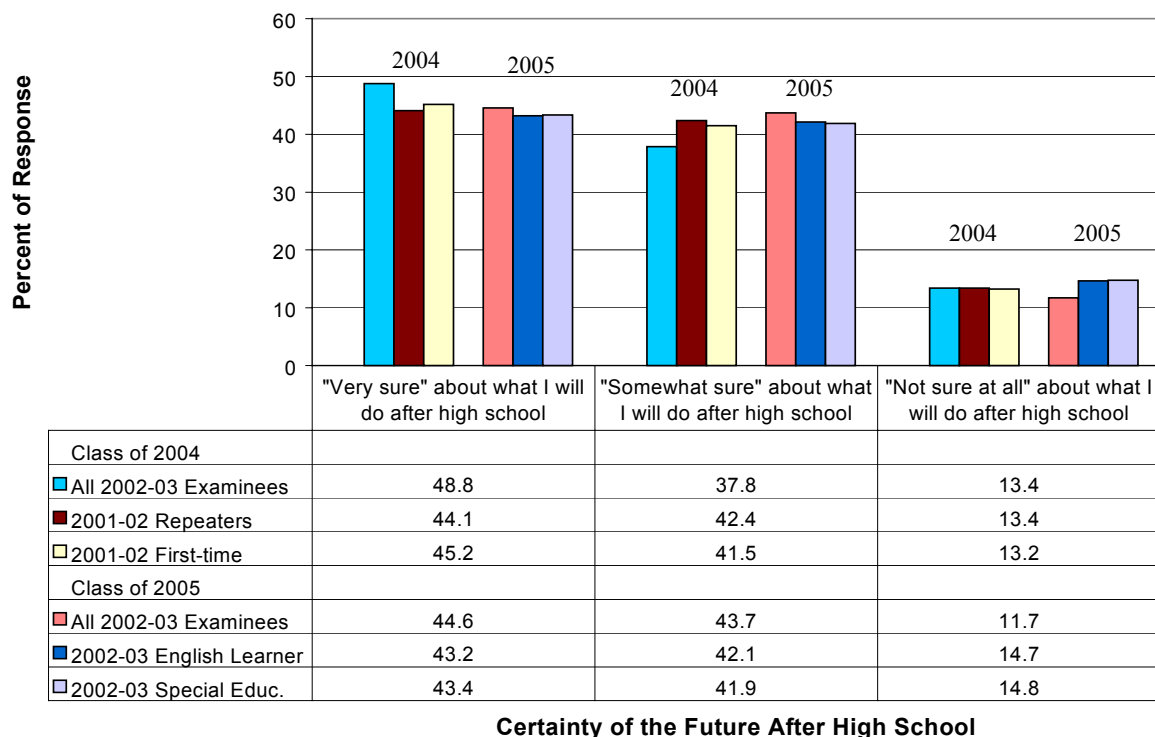


**Figure 3.10.** Different cohorts' responses to Question 5 following the math test—What do you think you will do after high school?

Question 6 of the student survey asked examinees how sure they were about what they would do after high school. Figure 3.11 and Figure 3.12 show that, overall, there was not much difference in responses to this question across cohorts either after the ELA test or the math test. Not surprisingly, a slightly higher percentage of 11<sup>th</sup> grade students felt “very sure” about their life after high school in comparison to the other cohorts (all of whom responded as 10<sup>th</sup> graders).



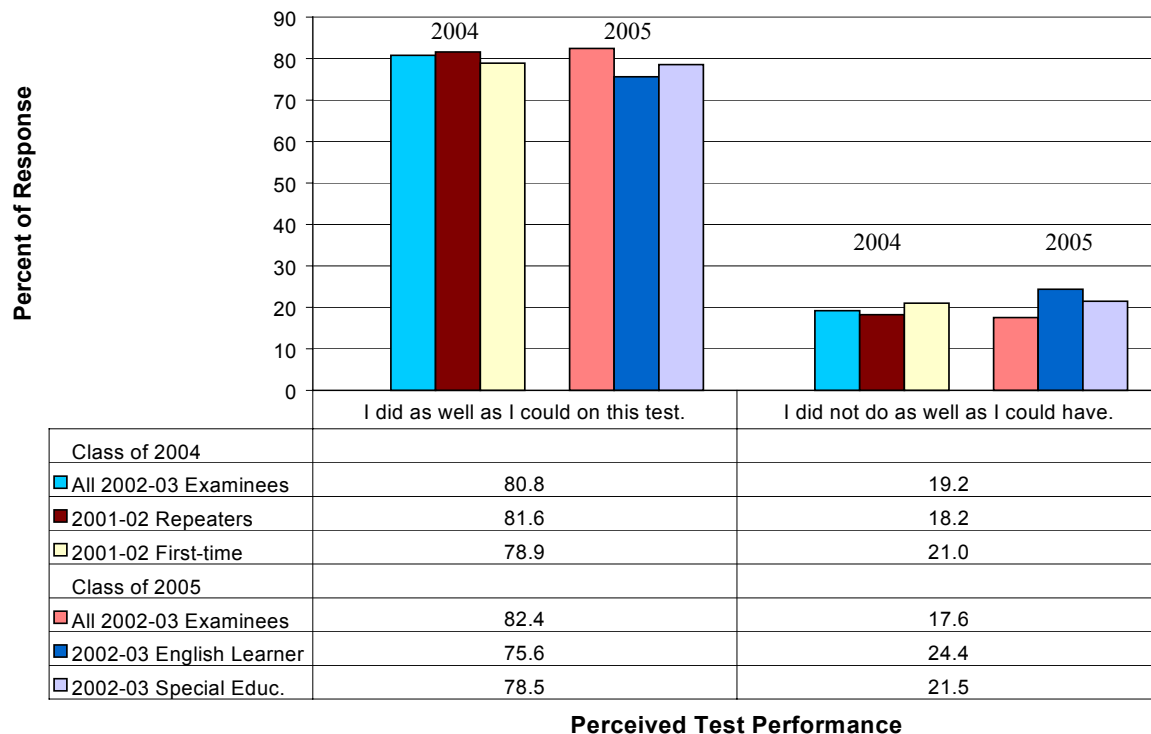
**Figure 3.11.** Different cohorts' responses to Question 6 following the ELA test—How sure are you about what you will do after high school?



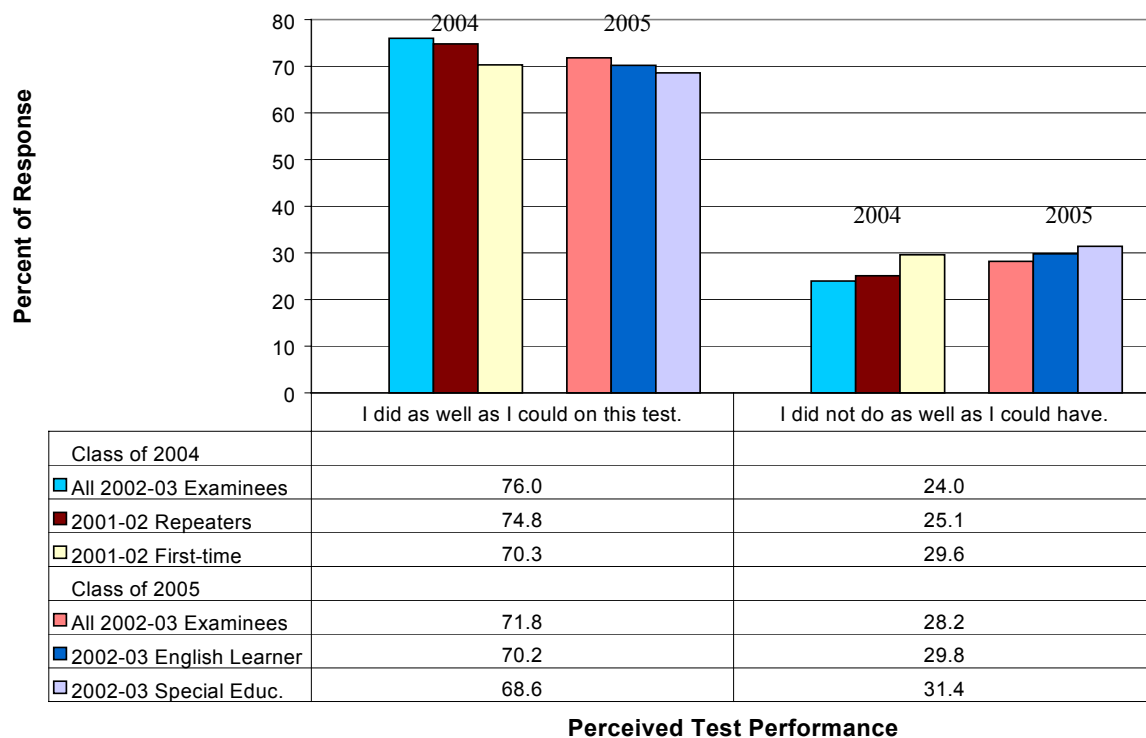
**Figure 3.12.** Different cohorts' responses to Question 6 following the math test—How sure are you about what you will do after high school?

### Perceived Test Performance and Influencing Factors

Question 7 of the student survey asked examinees if they performed as well as they could have on the test. Responses from all the cohorts to this question after the ELA test and the math test are presented in Figure 3.13 and Figure 3.14, respectively. More than three quarters of the respondents from each cohort indicated that “I did as well as I could on this test” after the ELA test. About 70 percent had a similar appraisal of their effort after the math test. Generally speaking, there was not much difference in responses to this question across different cohorts.

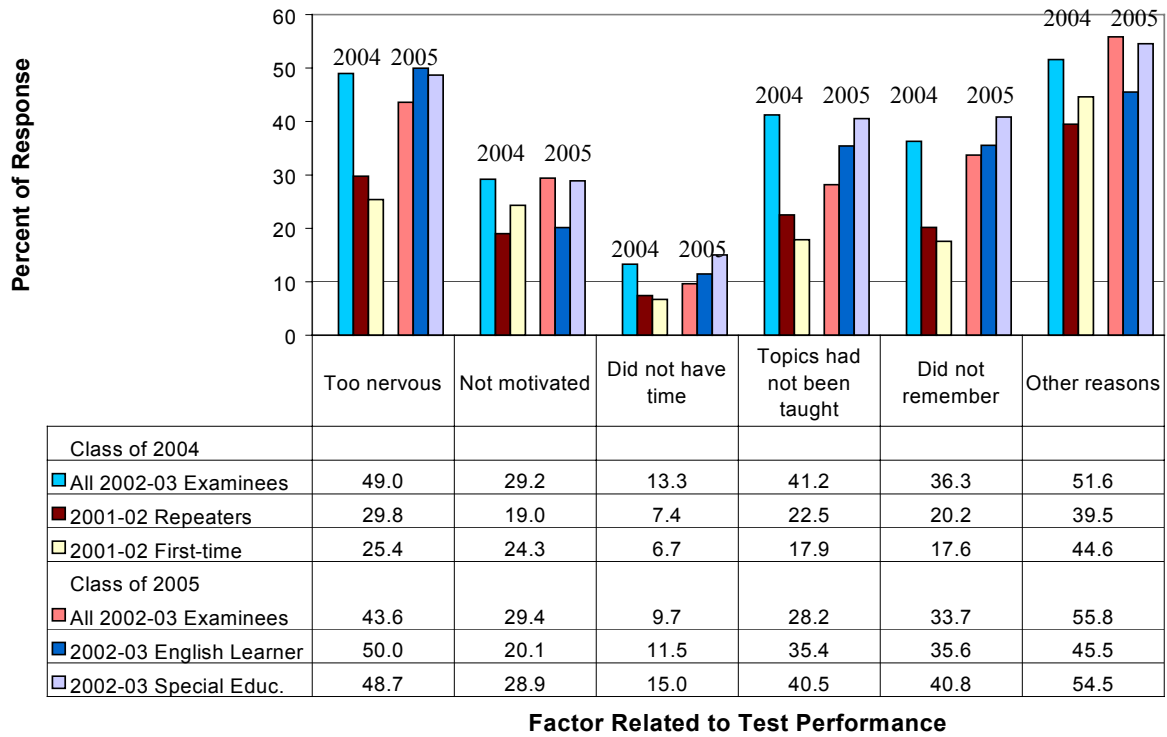


**Figure 3.13.** Different cohorts’ responses to Question 7 following the ELA test—How well did you do on this test?

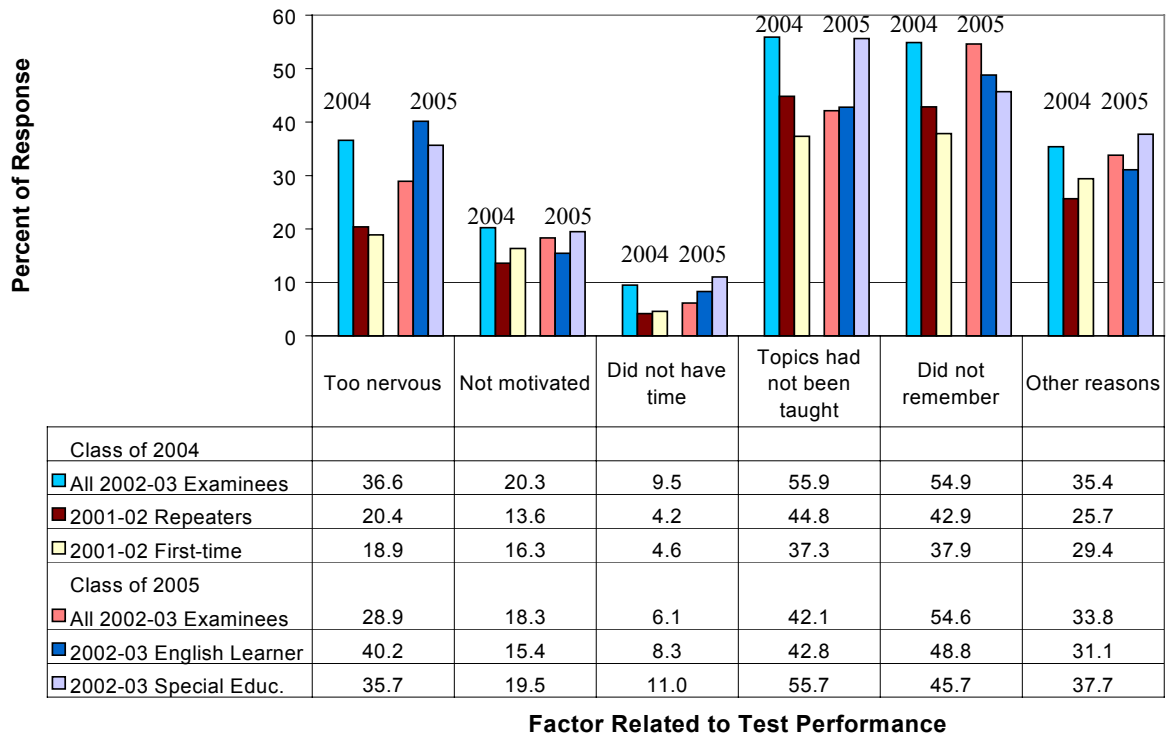


**Figure 3.14.** Different cohorts' responses to Question 7 following the math test—How well did you do on this test?

Question 8 of the student survey asked examinees what factors affected their test performance. Responses to this question from all the cohorts after the ELA test and the math test are presented in Figure 3.15 and Figure 3.16, respectively. Regardless of the “other reasons” category, the most often indicated factors were “too nervous,” “topics had not been taught,” and “did not remember what was taught.” Among the three options, the “too nervous” option was reported most frequently by the ELA respondents while the “topics had not been taught” option and the “did not remember” option were reported more often by the math respondents. Compared to the two 2001–02 cohorts in the class of 2004, students from the class of 2005 and the “all 2002–03 examinees” cohort in the class of 2004 were more likely to use all the given factors to explain why they did not do as well as they could have on the tests. Compared to the all 2002–03 examinees in the class of 2005, students receiving special education services and English learners showed disadvantages because they felt more nervous and needed more time; and they (especially the respondents also receiving special education services) were also more likely to report that topics which had not been taught were on the test.



**Figure 3.15.** Different cohorts' responses to Question 8 following the ELA test—The main reasons I did not do as well on this test as I could have are...



**Figure 3.16.** Different cohorts' responses to Question 8 following the math test—The main reasons I did not do as well on this test as I could have are...

## Summary

In general, student responses to questions about preparation and effort for the test and plans for graduation and beyond have been relatively constant.

*For students overall:* More than three-quarters expect to graduate from high school, although up to half of the students most at risk of not passing the CAHSEE believe that graduation will be harder because of the CAHSEE. More than 60 percent of all students expect to go to either a four-year or a community college. About three-quarters of the students thought they did as well as they could have on the test with about 60 percent indicating they took specific steps to prepare for the test. About one-quarter of the students reported not doing as well as they could have on the assessment. Of these, about 40 percent (about 10% overall) felt they had not been taught some of the material on the test. A slightly higher proportion reported having been taught the knowledge and skills assessed by CAHSEE, but having forgotten some of what they were taught.

*For EL students and students with disabilities:* There were a few notable differences for students in the Class of 2004 who were English learners and students with disabilities within the Class of 2005. These students were less sure about graduation and fewer expected to go to college. More of them reported that they were nervous and may not have done as well as they could have on the exam.